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## *Blaming capitalism*

# Mass youth revolt shakes Spain

## Tahrir Square comes to Madrid

**By Ben Carroll**

Drawing inspiration from the fighting spirit and determination of Tahrir Square and the peoples of Egypt, Tunisia and the Middle East, the peoples of Spain took the struggle against capitalist austerity, mass unemployment and the conditions of the economic crisis to a new level this past week.

Demonstrations and occupations of city plazas erupted across the Spanish state beginning on May 15 and, as of May 23, show no signs of faltering.

On May 15, a week before regional and local elections were to take place, protests started up in cities throughout the country against the government's austerity program and mass unemployment, as well as to demand a number of democratic reforms of the political system.

The officially reported unemployment rate sits at a staggering 21.3 percent, the highest in Europe. For young people, the statistics are even worse, as 45 percent of people aged 18 to 25 are unemployed. The situation for youth is so dire that they are referred to as the "youth without a future" or "the lost generation." Many have begun referring to themselves as "los indignados" (those who are "fed up").

Tens of thousands were in the streets that day. Following the demonstration in Madrid, young people and workers took over and began an around-the-clock occupation of the central plaza there, the Puerta del Sol. This bold action inspired numerous other occupations of plazas in major cities throughout the country; people demonstrated in more than 166 cities during the week. At least 10 occupations of city squares were also being reported in Italy, and there was a protest outside the Spanish Embassy in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic.

While the capitalist-owned press has heavily focused on the role of social media in these demonstrations — and it is undeniable that those sites have been an important tool among many used by organizers — it is the objective conditions of the capitalist crisis, the austerity measures and anger over the bank bailouts that have driven masses of young people and workers into the streets throughout the Spanish state, from Galicia to the Basque Country to Catalonia, as well as in the capital city.

"I'm here against the system, against everything, the banks, the government, the Popular Party, unemployment. You name it. Nothing works," journalism student Sabina Ortega told the Christian Science Monitor (May 20). "It's against a two-party system. And my goal is to feel represented. I want politicians to know they are not listening. I'll stay here as long as I have to."

Despite a ban imposed on the occupations by the Spanish government on May 20, two days ahead of the scheduled elections, tens of thousands of people in Puerta del Sol and elsewhere around the country defied these orders and con-

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## *When workers can't take it any more*

- Jobs: the real issue
- Strikes in California
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- Anti-worker laws in Wisconsin

See centerfold

Protest at Wisconsin State Capitol, May 14. PHOTOS: SUE RUGGLES, AFT LOCAL 212

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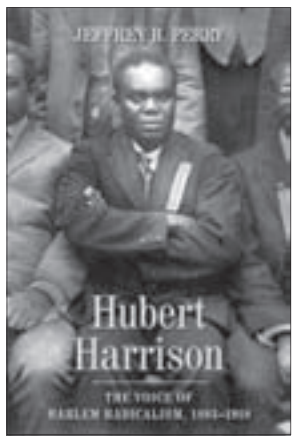
# Bringing out of obscurity an influential Black leader

**By Abayomi Azikiwe**
**Editor, Pan-African News Wire**




*Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism 1883-1918, by Jeffrey B. Perry (Columbia University Press, New York, 2009)*

This is the first volume of a definitive political biography of radical socialist and nationalist leader Hubert Henry Harrison, whose involvement in the early 20th century in the Socialist Party, the Garvey Movement, the Liberty League and other organizations set a standard that would heavily influence Black and left activism and thinking for decades to come.

Born in the Caribbean nation of St. Croix in 1883, an island colonized by Denmark and later the U.S., Harrison grew up as a poor agricultural laborer on a plantation. His mother was an immigrant worker from Barbados and his father was born in St. Croix.

Despite Harrison's poverty he was able to attend school. His literary competency as well as a strong identification with the working class and poor would prove pivotal in his political career, which blossomed after he migrated to the U.S. in 1900.

The United States stood at a crossroads politically and economically during the years at the turn of the 20th century. It was a period of tremendous growth through immigration affecting New York City and other urban centers across the country and also in its international influence.

Over the next two decades there would be the rise of the motor vehicle industry, mass transportation and the explosion of mass media. Politically the first two decades of the 20th century would become noted for the emergence of larger social movements that sought to address continuing racism and class oppression in the U.S. and around the world.

According to the author of the biography, Jeffrey B. Perry, "Harrison served as the foremost Black organizer, agitator and theoretician in the Socialist Party of New York during its 1912 heyday; as the founder and leading figure of the militant, World War I-era New Negro movement; and as the editor of the Negro World and principal radical influence on the Garvey movement (described by the historian Randall K. Burkett as 'the largest mass-based protest movement in Black American history') during its radical high point in 1920."

Harrison's "views on race and class profoundly influenced a generation of New Negro militants, including the class-radical socialists A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, the future communists Cyril Briggs and Richard B. Moore, and the race-radical Marcus Garvey. Considered more race conscious than Randolph and Owen and more class conscious than Garvey, Harrison is the key link in the ideological unity of the two great trends of the Black Liberation Movement — the labor and civil rights trends associated with Martin Luther King Jr. and the nationalist trend associated with Malcolm X."

### Socialism and Black Liberation

In 1910 Harrison wrote two letters to the editor of the New York Sun criticizing the views of Booker T. Washington from the left, and Perry attributes to this the reason Harrison lost his job with the postal service.

After that Harrison worked full-time for the Socialist Party of America and became the leading Black proponent of the organization for several years. Under the banner of the Socialist Party, he lectured broadly against capitalism and become a campaigner for its 1912 presidential candidate, Eugene V. Debs. Harrison initiated the Colored Socialist Club, which is reputed to be the first major effort to recruit African Americans into the Socialist Party.

Later Harrison wrote a regular column for the New York Call and the International Socialist Review entitled "The Negro and Socialism." He emphasized that it was essential for the Socialist Party to seriously address the national oppression of African Americans and that if this was not done, it would limit the overall program of the party.

Harrison fell out with the Socialist Party over its refusal to militantly fight racism among its members and within the broader U.S. society. His criticism derived from the continuation of segregated locals in the South as well as racist positions on Asian immigration. He concluded by 1914 that the Socialist Party was putting the interests of its white constituents ahead of those of the African Americans and Asians.

In 1914-15 he affiliated with the Modern School Movement, formed by the Spanish anarchist/educator Francisco Ferrer. In addition, he created the Radical Forum where he laid the basis for the New Negro Movement, a predecessor of the so-called Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s.

During World War I Harrison formed the Liberty League and the Voice as an alternative to the more moderate views of the NAACP. The program of the Liberty League advocated internationalism, political independence for the colonized countries in the Caribbean and Africa, anti-lynching legislation, full enforcement of the 14th and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution, along with armed self-defense and mass organizing.

### Garveyism & communism

By 1920 Harrison was appointed editor of the Negro World, the widely circulated newspaper of the Universal Negro Improvement Association founded by Marcus Garvey in 1914. Garvey relocated from Jamaica in 1916 and settled in Harlem, from where the UNIA would grow into a mass-based organization throughout the U.S., the Caribbean and Latin America, and the African continent.

After 1920 Harrison criticized Garvey's program from the left. He continued to write for the Negro World until 1922 but became involved with other organizations such as the American Negro Labor Congress and the Workers Party (later known as the Communist Party).

By 1924 he set out to form a united front among African Americans by forming the International Colored Unity League. Harrison, through the ICUL, advocated for political rights, economic and social justice, and the creation of a separate African state in the U.S.

Prior to his death in 1927 at the untimely age of 44, Harrison edited the publication of the ICUL, the Voice of the Negro. He announced publicly that he was to be treated for appendicitis and later died on the operating table.

Harrison's funeral was well attended in Harlem, yet his legacy has remained obscure among younger generations of activists and intellectuals. This book written by Jeffrey B. Perry is a well-deserved contribution to the literature on the intersection between African-American political movements, social philosophies, and that of the emerging socialist and communist movements inside the United States during the first three decades of the 20th century. □

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# FBI steps up anti-communist witch-hunt

**By Michael Martinez**
**Los Angeles**

May 20 protest at Federal Building in Los Angeles. WW PHOTO: JOHN PARKER

The sun had not dawned yet on the cold, crisp morning of May 17 in Alhambra, a neighborhood east of Los Angeles. It was hard to believe spring had arrived that morning when at 5 a.m. the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department SWAT team assembled in front of Carlos Montes' driveway and front yard. The silence was shattered along with Montes' door as the officers rammed it down and then sprang into his home bearing automatic rifles.

Montes is a member of Freedom Road Socialist Organization. He has been a longtime activist for immigrant rights and Chicano liberation in southern California. He was a founder of the Brown Berets and a fighter with Chicano Moratorium.

A leader in the Southern California Immigration Coalition, Montes has led the big May 1 immigrant marches in Los Angeles since 2006, along with many other fighters like BAYAN USA, Union del Barrio and the International Action Center.

Although the LASD claimed they raided Montes' residence over an illegal weapon's charge, the true nature of the raid was revealed when they ransacked his house and took historical political documents dealing with more than 40 years of his activism, photos, his computers and his cell phones.

### Stop the witch-hunt

Montes is not the only activist who has been targeted by the FBI for his solidarity work. Last September the FBI raided 23 anti-war and international solidarity activists' homes. Many of them belong to FRSO, the same organization to which Montes belongs. They were subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury.

After these subpoenas were issued, Montes became active, along with many other supporters, among them Workers World Party and Fight Imperialism, Stand Together, in opposing the government's witch-hunt against FRSO members in the Midwest.

Montes was also named in the FBI's subpoena which was left in the Twin Cities Anti-War Committee's office on Sept. 24. Like many of the 23 activists called before the grand jury, he had helped to organize the mass march there on the opening day of the 2008 Republican National Convention.

### Building the fightback

On May 20 a crowd of more than 100 activists gathered in front of the Federal Building in downtown Los Angeles. What was originally set up as a press conference became a raucous rally supporting Montes against the FBI charges.

This writer opened the rally, as the crowd chanted, "FBI: Hands off the movement." Montes thanked everyone for being there for him and showing support.

John Parker, West Coast regional coordinator of the IAC, spoke in Montes' defense. He denounced the FBI raids and called for solidarity, evoking Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by stating, "An injury to one is an injury to all."

Terrie Cervas of Gabriela USA compared the FBI raid against Montes to the treatment faced by political activists in the Philippines at the hands of the U.S.-backed and -trained government.

A truck displaying a large banner in solidarity with Montes stopped traffic in front of the rally. Soon, two Homeland Security SUVs showed up and the truck moved. The government agents chased down the truck and stopped it toward the end of the block. Half a block away, those at the rally could see the agents harassing the truck driver.

The demonstrators rushed over to the truck and pressured the agents to release the driver. The angry crowd chanted, "Let him go! Let him go." Feet began to move off the sidewalk and into the street. The agents were being surrounded, and feeling the crowd's pressure, let the truck driver go.

The demonstrators returned to the Federal Building to hear others speak who had been recently targeted by the state, like Alex Sanchez, leader of Homies Unidos, and Nativo Lopez, a long-time immigrant rights advocate.

More local actions will be announced. The FBI raids against Montes and others are unacceptable. The only thing that will stay the hand of the state from repeating another wave of fascist-like McCarthyist incarcerations and COINTELPRO-style repression will be the people's fightback movement. □

# NYC forum builds resistance to state repression

**By Dolores Cox**
**New York**

Last September FBI raids took place in several Midwestern cities. Twenty-three activists had their residences searched. Their belongings, such as computers, personal documents, organizing materials and files, were confiscated. These activists were served with subpoenas to appear before a Chicago grand jury. All have taken the Fifth Amendment and refused to testify against movements for peace and social justice. As a result, some could be indicted, leading to extended jail time for not cooperating with the federal government. These indictments may be imminent.

The latest raid took place at the home of a Los Angeles veteran Chicano activist, Carlos Montes, by the FBI and the County Sheriff during the week of May 16, indicating the attacks haven't ended.

The government says it's investigating the activists' "material support for foreign terrorist organizations." In reality, the activists are being accused of speaking truth to power against U.S. wars and terrible regimes abroad that the U.S. supports. These activists have stood in solidarity with the struggles of peoples of the world, especially those in Palestine and Colombia.

In New York City on May 21 the New York Committee to Stop FBI Repression, Al-Awda NY, DRUM and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement sponsored an event to build the resistance and support network for the activists. The groups also stress the urgency of strengthening international solidarity.

Hatem Abudayyed, a Palestinian human rights activist whose home in Chicago was raided, was one of the speakers. He emphasized the importance of forming alliances with other organizations. He also spoke about the U.S. government's repression and attacks against Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims.

On May 6 the bank accounts of Abudayyed and his spouse were frozen. Organizers responded with a "day of action" against the government and the bank, making phone calls demanding the freezes be lifted. Five days later they were lifted, but the Twin Cities Federal Bank stated it no longer wanted them as customers and closed their accounts. Abudayyed stated that they've received support from the teachers' union, academic community and religious leaders in Chicago.

Through an interpreter, the mother of a member of Desis Rising Up and Moving talked about the impact of local and federal law enforcement misconduct on South Asian, Arab and Muslim communities, particularly on the youth. At age 19 her son was targeted by the FBI and a New York police undercover agent in an entrapment scheme. He is now serving a 30-year prison sentence in a high-security Indiana prison built for Muslims, she stated. Youth there are not allowed contact with friends or family; none had prior criminal history. She added that people must make this government transparent and fight to change laws and the system.

Brandon King from the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement gave an historical overview of the FBI's counterintelligence program — founded in the 1950s — and police repression in Black communities. Black activists have always been targets of violence and assassinations. Statistically, there are more Black men in prison today than were enslaved in 1850. The establishment of COINTELPRO was to "neutralize" freedom fighters and groups during the Civil Rights and Black Liberation Movements. King stressed the need to have an elevated consciousness and to put an end to wars, terrorism and occupation here in the U.S.

Lamis Deek, an Al-Awda NY member and National Lawyers Guild attorney, spoke of increased post-9/11 threats and expansion of Homeland Security activities. Palestinians in New York continue to be victims of FBI entrapment by informants in "predisposition-to-commit-crimes" cases.

A Center for Constitutional Rights attorney, Shayana Kadidal, gave a legal update on the scope of the Material Support Statute in the wake of the June 2010 Supreme Court decision, Humanitarian Law Project vs. Holder. According to the U.S. Department of State, no material support is allowed to be given to "foreign terrorist organizations" anywhere in the world. Support is defined as giving skilled training, expert advice/assistance, personal help or services (including intangible services). The government uses the term "agent" acting on behalf of a group, rather than the word "member" of a group. Activism is considered material support. But government interpretations are also ambiguous.

To support and build resistance to FBI repression, sign the online "Pledge to Resist FBI and Grand Jury Repression" at www.StopFBI.net. Important emergency responses are planned in the event that indictments are handed down. In New York City the emergency action will take place in Times Square 5-7 p.m. outside the military recruiting station. For more information, contact nycsfrlist@gmail.com or 917-397-0103. □

# Supporters rally 'Free the Fort Dix 5!'

Attorneys for the Fort Dix 5 gave oral arguments for five appeals before a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in Philadelphia on May 23. With these five appeals and seven more written appeals, the lawyers hope to convince the federal appellate panel to overturn their clients' convictions, to grant them new trials, or at least to lower their sentences. It may be months before the judges' decisions are announced.

Before the hearing, dozens of supporters yelled "Free the Fort Dix 5" and other chants and speakers denounced the FBI's campaign of prosecuting innocent Muslims. The five are all serving long prison terms — three were given life plus 30 years — for a "conspiracy" that amounted to nothing more than a sustained campaign of government entrapment.

**— Report and photo by Joe Piette**

## After Georgia passes anti-immigrant law

# Boycott campaign gathers momentum

**By Dianne Mathiowetz**
**Atlanta**

Immigrant rights activists in Georgia have stepped up their visibility campaign against discriminatory legislation, particularly HB 87, an Arizona copycat law that legalizes racial profiling.

Scheduled to take effect July 1, the law empowers local police throughout the state to arrest and detain anyone not carrying proof of legal residency. It also requires employers to use the federal E-Verify system before hiring a worker. HB 87 also criminalizes anyone transporting an undocumented person.

Several Georgia counties are already involved in the 287(g) program, which authorizes local law agencies to enforce immigration policies. Thousands of undocumented workers from around the world have been deported from Georgia in recent years for minor traffic offenses under this program.

Corrections Corporation of America operates several for-profit prisons in Georgia. It has been revealed that its lobbyists played a major role in writing Arizona's SB 1070, and similar charges are being made about its influence on the Georgia legislation.

PHOTO: GEORGIA STUDENTS FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

**Students drop banner during GSU commencement ceremonies.**

On May 7, Georgia Students for Public Higher Education conducted a banner drop focusing on another anti-immigrant piece of legislation at the commencement ceremonies of Georgia State University, held at the mammoth Georgia Dome. This act bars undocumented students from attending the top five schools in the university system, no matter their qualifications.

The next weekend a large rally was held in Gainesville, Ga., the home of several of the most anti-immigrant Georgia politicians, including Gov. Nathan Deal. It was organized by students at Gainesville State College and a number of community and faith-based groups from this rural county.

On May 15, banners opposing HB 87 were dropped during the Civil Rights baseball game played at Turner Field in Atlanta, where Grammy-winning musician Carlos Santana publicly denounced the legislation.

Hundreds of women and children marched in downtown Atlanta on May 22 to protest the implementation of HB 87. Organized by the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, the mothers' protest is part of a series of public rallies and actions building to a day of "No work" on July 1.

A national campaign to boycott Georgia is gathering momentum, with the AFL-CIO announcing it will not schedule any conferences in the state as long as HB 87 is law. □

# Bronx workers, community fight to save postal jobs

**By Dee Knight**
**Bronx, N.Y.**

Members of the South Bronx Community Congress joined postal workers on the steps of the Bronx General Post Office at 149th Street and the Grand Concourse on May 23 to demand that officials of the United States Postal Service suspend plans to move Bronx mail-processing services to Manhattan.

"Once again the post office is trying to reduce services in our community," said Maxi Rivera, a retired postal worker and an SBCC leader. "We stopped them before and we will stop them again. To permit this would result in the displacement of hundreds of workers and a reduction in vital services."

Rivera said the U.S. Postal Service scheduled and held a community feedback hearing earlier this month without proper community notification. "It was like a secret meeting," he said. "They were surprised when some of us showed up. We are demanding that the post office provide widespread community notification before a second hearing is held."

Workers World spoke with several members of the Amalgamated Postal Workers Union, N.Y. Metro Local, who work at the Bronx General Post Office, including Luz Mendez, Mayra Colon and Josefina Rivera. "We're fighting for our jobs," said Rivera. She questioned the USPS argument that it would be "cost effective" to move the Bronx mail processing to Manhattan. "Our efficiency is higher," she said, pointing to a 98 percent rate of next-day delivery, compared with about 72 percent in Manhattan.

Ramon Jimenez, another SBCC leader, said the fight for postal services and local jobs is part of the bigger battle against austerity budgets at city, state and federal levels. "The storm we predicted has arrived," Jimenez declared. "It seems all levels of government have decided to make the poor and working class pay for the bankers' crisis. We won't allow it."

Jimenez detailed plans for an Action Assembly on June 4 at Hostos College — directly across 149th Street from the post office. This will be the first borough-level Action Assembly of four planned for early June. They plan to map out a fightback plan against Mayor Michael Bloomberg's pro-banker budget, which is under debate in the City Council and is to be voted on in late June.

"We are committed to forcing a rejection of this budget or stopping it in its tracks. We need a People's Budget," Jimenez said.

"A People's Budget would put people's needs first before the banks," Jimenez explained. "It would save rent control and Section 8 housing subsidies to protect people's right to a place to live. It would stop the drive to shut schools and cut 6,000 teachers' jobs. Instead of raising City University tuition, it would eliminate tuition fees, because we have already paid for them with our taxes, which must not go first to the banks.

"A People's Budget would also guarantee that all fire houses remain open with full service to protect against fires," Jimenez said. "We remember too well a generation ago when half of the South Bronx was allowed to burn to the ground."

WW PHOTO: DEE KNIGHT

**Maxi Rivera, right, of South Bronx Community Congress with postal workers.**

A planning committee for the June 4 Action Assembly met at Hostos College immediately after the press conference at the GPO. In addition to South Bronx Community Congress members, it included representatives of the Freedom Party, Service Workers Local 32BJ Schools Division, AFSCME District Council 37, Bail Out the People Movement, Picture the Homeless, the Coalition for Public Education, the People's Power Movement, Students United CUNY and the CUNY Mobilization Network. □

# Indigenous occupy shellmound to

**By Terri Kay**
**Vallejo, Calif.**

Native peoples of California and many supporters are in their fourth week of a vigil and occupation at the Glen Cove Shellmound in Vallejo, Calif., known as Sogorea Te in Karkin Ohlone language.

Wounded Knee DeOcampo, a Miwok elder, explained to this reporter that the site dates back 3,500 years, to 1500 B.C. It was a sacred village, where many tribes in what is now known as California came to pray, trade, intermarry and bury their dead. Among the tribes known to have used the site were the Wappo, Coastal Me-Wauk, Bay Me-Wauks, Yokuts, Patwin, Wintu and Ohlone.

DeOcampo and others have been in a 12-year battle with the Greater Vallejo Recreation District and the city of Vallejo to prevent them from desecrating the site. DeOcampo says this is a crucial and critical time, as these public entities are now preparing to build a parking lot with night lights, a bathroom, trails and benches on the site. All tribes, spiritual leaders and elders are being called to protect Sogorea Te, known as Glen Cove.

DeOcampo further told how 13,000 human remains have been removed from this and other California sites and are being stored at the University of California-Berkeley in footlockers. The Native people want them reinterred to Mother Earth. Traditional ceremonies have always been held at Sogorea Te. DeOcampo says they are determined to protect this spiritual way for a better life as Indigenous people.

Fred Short, the American Indian Movement spiritual leader for the state of California, is also participating in the vigil at Sogorea Te. He happened to be celebrating his birthday on this day, as well. Short talked about how AIM has been involved since 1969 in struggles to end injustice against Indian people. He said they are determined to hold the line against any more development at the Glen Cove site.

Short said they are campaigning for the California State Assembly and President Barack Obama to sign the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights of Indigenous People. The U.S. and Australia have yet to sign. This declaration would protect all sacred sites.

Supporters can help by sending dona-

# An appeal to WW readers

WW PHOTO

For more than 50 years, Workers World/Mundo Obrero has contributed a revolutionary Marxist perspective that has shed light on events, both international and domestic, from the point of view of the interests of the working class and the oppressed. It has championed and explained the struggle to end this insatiable capitalist profit system, which is bringing grief to the whole planet.

From the battle lines in Wisconsin, where workers are fighting an anti-union onslaught; to the May Day rallies for immigrant and workers' rights; to besieged Gaza, where the Palestinian people are resisting Israeli aggression, our activist reporters send firsthand accounts and photos that counter the lies and distortions in the monopoly-owned media.

**Today, WW/MO is the ONLY socialist/communist newspaper in the U.S. that continues to publish a weekly bi-lingual printed edition, while also putting up a complete PDF version online that reaches hundreds of thousands of readers around the world each week.**

Even in this electronic age and despite the costs, we must have a printed edition. The paper must be at every major event fighting injustice. Militant unionists coast to coast order bundles of WW/MO for their members' study. Strikers and anti-war protesters welcome coverage of their struggles and pass the paper on. Prisoners starving for real news of the world outside the walls are sent subscriptions; they deeply appreciate analysis of the conditions of racism and economic violence that put them behind bars.

WW PHOTO: SHARON BLACK

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We are asking you to help keep this newspaper going by donating to the WW/MO Spring Fund Drive. Our goal is to raise $60,000. It's a small budget for a fighting newspaper with a big impact, and that reflects our all-volunteer staff. Unfortunately, the landlord, the printer and the utilities don't volunteer their services. So please give us a hand.

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## Workers World Party in South Central

# A new place for L.A. youth

**By Aracely Espinosa**
**Los Angeles**

The Los Angeles branch of Workers World Party has a brand-new headquarters in South Central that has also become the home of a new community attraction. On May 21 the center — which is ordinarily used for meetings and as a place to prep for demonstrations and make placards, banners and picket signs — was transformed into a poetry club, where youth came to recite and rhyme up a cultural storm.

During the early evening, previous to having an open mic, Workers World Party members presented the film, "Justice on Trial," about U.S. political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, who for years has languished on death row after a trial steeped in racism. Gloria Verdieu from the San Diego Free Mumia Coalition gave a very necessary talk updating everyone about Mumia's case.

Later that evening, the doors opened to the young poets and visitors in South Central.

Mike Martinez, a young member of Workers World Party, welcomed all those present. Some had been personally invited, others were curious observers who just showed up and stayed as they got hooked on the poetry and show.

It all started with some shyness and skepticism until Martinez broke the ice, performing a well-known poem by Langston Hughes, "Let America be America again," and later making a special mention in honor of Nicaraguan revolutionary Augusto César Sandino, in commemoration of the anniversary of his birth.

Almost unexpectedly, the spotlight was stolen by Black female poet Jamiealita Johnson Muhammad, reciting about racism and gender oppression. She was highly applauded and asked for an encore, but gracefully gave way to the next performer, the Mexican poet David Romero. Romero is well known in the Southern California spoken word scene.

And so, the cipher of poetry began to take shape with each poet reciting at their best, giving the spectators a revolutionary occasion where no subject was left unturned, from racism and other forms of oppression to the comedic occurrences of everyday life. The audience laughed and rallied behind the calls for revolution in every line.

Martinez used the opportunity to introduce the host organization, Workers World Party, to the poets and audience and invited longtime member Scott Scheffer to speak. Scheffer talked about the latest victory in the battle against home foreclosures, where a bank we were targeting for a picket line got wind of our protest plans from a flyer we handed out. The bank called us and decided to meet our demands. This was proof to all that our organized actions work. He called on everyone to join us.

Just as significant was the participation of guests from Mexicali, Mexico, who presented their work on the border between Mexico and the U.S. in support of deportees who need shelter and support until they recuperate and are able to try crossing back into the U.S. We passed the hat to support their work.

The night ended with big smiles. As a result, people have a new place to soak in some good times and culture in South Central.

Doors open at 7 p.m. on Saturday nights. You can step into a world of rhymes, metaphors and spoken words used to defend the most just causes of these times. Next, we will commemorate Ho Chi Minh, Malcolm X and José Martí.

The new office is at 1905 Rodeo Rd. For more info, email la@workers.org or call 323-515-5870. ☐

# thwart bulldozers

WW PHOTO: TERRI KAY

**Vallejo officials want to desecrate this ancient Native burial site.**

tions to cover court costs to wepay.com/donate/137138. They can sign the online petition at petitiononline.com/ssprit/petition.html. Supporters are encouraged to come by the site for a few hours or a few days to help maintain a strong presence at the vigil. Directions are available at protectglencove.org. ☐

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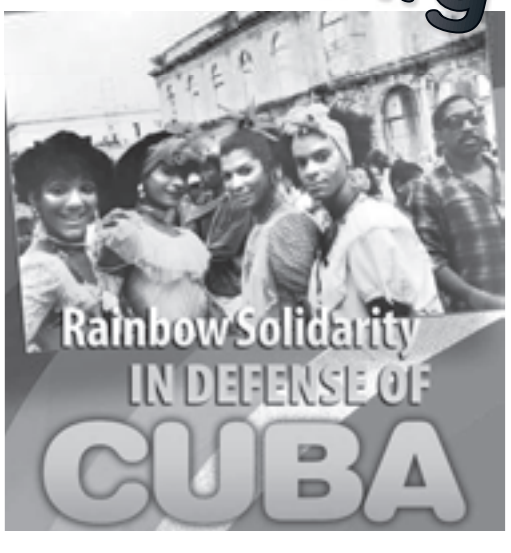


## Workers not buying lies about budget

# Priority should be jobs, not cutting deficit

**By G. Dunkel**

May 12 march on Wall Street, New York. WW PHOTO G. DUNKEL

The United States hit its debt ceiling May 16 without much notice, since plans for "deficit reduction" were already filling the airwaves and producing thousands of articles. It will take until the middle of August before restrictions on spending start curtailing the operations of the U.S. government.

Between March 1962 and January 2010, Congress raised the debt limit 78 times (Congressional Research Service). Raising it is generally no big deal, but now the right wing in Congress is trying to extract major cuts in social services as a condition for letting the government continue to function.

A recent Gallup poll (May 5-8) indicates that the major concerns of working people in the U.S. are the state of the economy and jobs, with the deficit a very distant third.

While profits, especially for the big banks, and production of goods and services in the U.S. economy have rebounded since 2009 to pre-recession levels, for workers the Great Recession is not over.

Last year 1.5 million people declared bankruptcy, banks foreclosed on a million homes and sent out nearly 3 million foreclosure notices, 43 million people got food stamps and more than 20 million people were either unemployed or underemployed, according to the Department of Labor. And these figures are definitely on the low side.

Unemployment rates are politically highly charged and often manipulated to make the situation of working people seem better. Nevertheless, official long-term unemployment is nearly as severe now as it was in the 1930s. Some 2 million people have reached the maximum of 99 weeks they are eligible to collect unemployment insurance — though in some states like Florida, the maximum is shorter — and 5.8 million people have been out of work for more than 27 weeks. (Department of Labor, Bureau of Economic Research, April report)

Unemployment for youth, Black people and Latinos/as is much higher. Even the BER says the figure for youth is 25 percent; for African Americans overall it is 16 percent and for Latinos/as nearly 12 percent.

Given the huge number of unemployed and the competition for work, there has been a steep and lasting drop in wages for people who take jobs that don't require the skills or education of their last job. (Wall Street Journal, Jan. 11) Even in fields demanding more than a bachelor's degree, like the 1.3 million higher education faculty, the average faculty member's purchasing power increased by only $70 from the academic year 2008-2009 to 2009-2010. In states where furloughs were enforced, salaries fell. Hawaii saw a 6.7 percent decline and Wisconsin a 2.5 percent decline. (National Education Association)

Last July an economic policy project at Yale released an "economic insecurity index" that defines economically insecure households as those whose available income fell by at least 25 percent, adjusted for inflation, from one year to the next. Jacob Hacker, the head of the project, said: "There is a clear long-term upward trend in the economic insecurity of American families. And while economic insecurity is substantially higher for less affluent and educated Americans than for other groups, it has risen across virtually all parts of American society." (Daily Finance, July 22, 2010) Hacker's project is also investigating to see if economic insecurity has contributed to the rise in suicides in the U.S. over the past few years.

### Workers' response to crisis

The push for "deficit reduction" due to the "fiscal crisis" is part of the political and ideological attack against public service workers. The major push back against this attack occurred in Wisconsin, where tens of thousands of workers came out against Gov. Scott Walker's attacks on the bargaining rights of public service unions, as well as on the unions' very existence.

The AFL-CIO leadership has responded to the Democratic Party's refusal to actively defend working people and oppose this push for austerity, layoffs, tax cuts for the rich, and bailouts for the banks and big companies by threatening to withhold its support and contributions to Democratic candidates in the 2012 elections. It is likely that this threat will fade under their old habit of getting out the vote for the "lesser of two evils."

Still, at the present moment the labor movement is taking some unusual stands and participating in movements alongside elements far to their left.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka went to Milwaukee on May Day to show unity with the struggle of immigrant workers and the struggle against union busting in Wisconsin. Speaking before 100,000 workers, he said that Gov. Scott Walker had "declared war on Wisconsin workers and, like you did before, you joined in a peaceful protest to say 'No! No!'

"And again your voices have been heard across this nation, inspiring an uprising of America's working people, standing together and saying 'No' to divide-and-conquer politics, 'No' to tearing working families down, rather than building us up, 'No' to corporate-backed politicians trying to turn us into a low-wage, no-rights workforce as payback to their CEO friends.

"This day — May Day — is our day to stand together shoulder to shoulder for immigrant and worker rights. Thank you for being here and showing Wisconsin and the world that we are one."

The demands of May 1 in Milwaukee included immediate legalization of all immigrants; no Arizona racist copycat legislation in Wisconsin; keep in-state tuition for immigrant students; and no union busting in Wisconsin or anywhere in the U.S. (Workers World, May 5)

Two significant recent demonstrations in New York involved marches on Wall Street, the financial capital of the U.S. and the symbolic and real home for all the speculators, fat-cat investment bankers and hedge fund managers whose real estate swindles started the financial crisis.

The first march on March 24 was initiated by a broad progressive coalition called New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts, which included unions, student groups mainly from City University of New York campuses, immigrant groups, progressive and community organizations, and left-wing political parties.

It protested budget cuts that would cause some schools to close and tuitions to rise, and would cut social services drastically and bring thousands of layoffs to public sector workers. Its demands included: "Today's the day the rich must pay!" and "Money for jobs and education, not for wars and occupation!"

Oliver Gray, associate director of AFSCME District Council 37, said at the rally that public workers will not allow Gov. Andrew Cuomo to blame them for the deficit. "How are we to blame," he asked, "when the governor wants to cut the taxes of the richest people in New York and gives back to Wall Street investors $15 billion a year in stock transfer taxes?"

A later rally on May 12 was called by a broader coalition of trade unions, with the United Federation of Teachers AFT Local 2 being the most active, but student groups, housing groups, welfare rights, social services like ACT-UP, anti-war groups and groups focused on immigrant issues all took part. Its press release demanded, "Make big banks and millionaires pay!" and called on Mayor Michael Bloomberg to end taxpayer-financed giveaways to Wall Street and support more taxes on millionaires to mitigate his proposed budget cuts.

From Milwaukee to New York, the demands were similar and showed a growing resistance to the banks' assaults on the working class, especially its poorest sections. □

## ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

### Calif. hospital workers nail CEO greed

After the Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System in California proposed belt-tightening measures — layoffs of 100 out of 900 workers and cuts to pensions and health benefits — during contract negotiations with the Healthcare Workers union, NUHW launched a counterattack. Union research into executive pay exposed that outgoing CEO Sam Downing is scheduled to collect a payout of nearly $4 million in so-called "supplemental" pensions, in addition to his annual pension of $150,000. So NUHW took the story to the L.A. Times, which ran an exposé on April 28. The story also noted that Downing's $790,000 salary in 2009 made him the third-highest-paid state employee. Then the State Assembly held a well-publicized hearing on executive pensions and voted to perform an audit of the publicly funded hospital in Monterey County. Incidentally, Salinas Valley has a long history of labor struggles. John Steinbeck set his epic novel "Grapes of Wrath" there, and César Chávez led local farm workers in a massive strike in the early 1970s. And the beat goes on. (nuhw.org, May 3)

### Kaiser nurses stage one-day strike in S. Calif.

The 2,500 nurses at 80 Kaiser Permanente facilities in Southern California called a one-day strike on May 18. Nearly 2,000 members of the Healthcare Workers union set up a picket line at Kaiser Los Angeles Medical Center to send a message to management: "We want a contract that protects patients and keeps our benefits intact. With nearly $1 billion in profits so far this year, Kaiser can easily afford to meet our demands." The NUHW release noted: "Because of our action last week, Kaiser's bargaining team knows without a doubt that we'll do whatever it takes to win a fair contract." (May 21)

### UW-Superior academic staff votes union

If Gov. Scott Walker thought that attacking collective bargaining rights of public sector workers would intimidate workers and kill unions, his agenda has totally backfired. The academic staff at the University of Wisconsin-Superior voted overwhelmingly May 18 to be represented by the American Federation of Teachers. This is the sixth time in the last three months that UW workers at various campuses have voted for union representation, and the first time in UW's history that academic staff — 174 part-time and nontenured faculty and nonteaching professionals — joined a union. The faculty at UW-S already belongs to the AFT. (aflcio.blog, May 19)

### Memphis strikers finally make Labor Hall of Fame

On April 29, in an emotional ceremony that included several standing ovations, the 1,300 Memphis sanitation workers who struck in 1968 for the right to join a union were inducted into the Labor Hall of Fame in Washington, D.C. This was the first time that a group of workers was inducted into the U.S. Labor Department institution. Striker Alvin Turner "drew strong parallels between the problems they faced in 1968 and the attacks on public employees today. ... He said in times like these, it is essential workers stick together." (Union City, Metro D.C. AFL-CIO online newsletter, May 2)

### NLRB sues Arizona over anti-union amendment

The National Labor Relations Board has sued Arizona to stop a recently passed amendment to the state's constitution requiring that workers hold secret ballot elections before a company will recognize a union. Says the NLRB, this interferes with federal law giving employers the choice of recognizing a union if the majority of workers sign cards, a practice known as card check. (New York Times, May 7) □

# More anti-worker laws stoke anger in Wisconsin

**By Bryan G. Pfeifer**
**Milwaukee**

PHOTO: SUE RUGGLES, AFT LOCAL 212

**Workers protested at Wisconsin Capitol on May 14 warning Gov. Walker that for the lives of the working class, "The fight is not over."**

On May 20, the Wisconsin Senate passed one of the most restrictive "Voter ID" laws in the United States. This followed the vote by the Wisconsin Assembly. Gov. Scott Walker said he would sign it quickly.

The new law requires a photo ID to vote and increases the state's residency rule from 10 days to 28 days. This will potentially disenfranchise thousands of seniors, students, immigrants, and poor and disabled people, according to the Wisconsin AFL-CIO. Members of Latino/a and African-American communities would be severely affected by this law, including youth.

The progressive coalition Wisconsin Resists is planning protests opposing the bill and its signing to be held at the state Capitol on May 25.

Protests also continue across the state to oppose the right-wing frenzy of draconian legislation being proposed, passed and/or signed by Walker. These new laws and proposed laws include attacks against the Earned Income Tax Credit by attempting to raise taxes on beneficiaries, more tax increases on poor people, initiatives aimed at expanding charter schools state-wide, as well as the ongoing efforts at union-busting. Additionally, progressive forces are opposing other attacks on the poor and working people of Wisconsin, including billions in cutbacks to vital social programs in Walker's 2011-13 state budget proposals.

"Gov. Walker talks tough about being a politician who refuses to raise taxes," said Stephanie Bloomingdale, secretary-treasurer of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO. "He thought we wouldn't notice his tax increase trick to raise taxes on the poor while cutting taxes for corporations. By reducing programs that low-income families rely on such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Homestead Act, Gov. Walker is redistributing the tax burden onto the backs of working Wisconsinites." (http://wisaflcio.typepad.com/)

The Wisconsin Supreme Court will hear arguments on June 6 on the union-busting bill signed by Walker on March 11, which would virtually eliminate collective bargaining rights for up to 200,000 public-sector workers. There are efforts underway to pack the court and protest on that day as well.

The Wisconsin AFL-CIO and other labor-community-student groups continue to engage in recall campaigns against politicians who voted for the union-busting bill in March.

To help and for more information, visit www.wisaflcio.org; wisaflcio.typepad.com; www.vdlf.org; www.defendwisconsin.org; and www.bailoutpeople.org. □

# Bosses buckled, fearing general strike

**By Martha Grevatt**

**1934**
**Toledo Auto-Lite strike**
PART THREE

The Ohio National Guard is often associated with the 1970 murder of four students — two antiwar protesters and two bystanders — at Kent State University. Yet their role as a violent suppressor of dissent did not begin there. They killed two Toledo workers during the 1934 Auto-Lite strike.

Electric Auto-Lite was a major parts supplier to Ford and one of Toledo's largest employers. The strike for union recognition, which began on April 13, was still not settled when the Guards were deployed on May 24.

In the wee hours of the morning the Guardsmen were able to temporarily disperse a crowd of 10,000 workers and supporters who had surrounded the plant long enough to escort away the hundreds of scabs and supervisors huddled inside. But by afternoon the strikers and their mass of supporters confronted the Guardsmen. Taunting was followed by rock throwing. The troops responded with tear gas.

What became called the "Battle of Chestnut Hill" ensued, with soldiers and workers throwing rocks and canisters of gas back and forth at one another. Bayonet charges did not intimidate the strikers or their supporters, who included family and community members, members of other unions, and a large contingent from the Lucas County Unemployed League. The Guard fired, first into the air and later at the crowd. Frank Hubay and Stephen Cyigon, neither of whom worked for Auto-Lite, were killed. Four others were wounded.

Women, who comprised more than 70 percent of the Auto-Lite workforce and an equal percentage of those on strike, fought fiercely. After the scabs were taken out of harm's way, production stopped, but an unfortunate fate befell a scab attempting to collect his paycheck. A group of women seized him and dragged him to an alleyway, where he was stripped naked except for his shoes and necktie. They paraded him around town to send a message that scabbing doesn't pay.

### Threat of citywide general strike worked

The plans of the company, backed by the city's Merchants and Manufacturers Association, to break the union — a "federal labor union" of the American Federation of Labor, Local 18384 — were falling to pieces. So were the plans of AFL President William Green, who set up the FLUs as temporary organizations to pull autoworkers into the AFL, with the intent of then parceling them out to the federation's conservative craft unions.

Green had been opposed to the strike. In fact, he generally opposed strikes, much like his successor, George ("I never walked a picket line") Meany.

This wasn't just a strike. It was a community uprising, and the tide was turning in the workers' favor. The Auto-Lite workers weren't the only ones fighting Toledo's moneyed establishment. There were disputes at other plants like Toledo Edison and elsewhere.

Despite Green's pressure on the city's Central Labor Union to "use influence to prevent strike action," it voted 68-35 to call a general strike. The number in favor increased with each subsequent meeting, and by May 31 nearly 100 delegates voted for the general strike. It was the big topic at a march of 12,000 the next day. The mass rally that followed drew 25,000. Even more people were talking about shutting Toledo down.

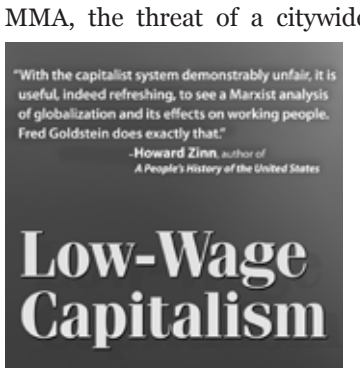
If there was any lingering intransigence on the part of Auto-Lite executives or the MMA, the threat of a citywide general strike was enough to bring the company to the table. The bosses, confident they could crush Local 18384, had scoffed at mediation. Now it was the union that turned down the newly created Auto Labor Board's offer to hammer out a compromise. Local 18384 negotiated directly with Auto-Lite as the sole bargaining agent, freezing out the company union known as the Auto-Lite Council. By June 4 the strikers were going back to work.

This early victory turned the tide in favor of Toledo's working class and paved the way for the United Auto Workers, founded a year later. One of the first locals chartered was Local 12, the former FLU 18384.

A memorial park, dedicated to the heroes of 1934, now occupies the site of this historic turning point.

*Martha Grevatt has been a UAW Chrysler worker for 23 years. Email mgrevatt@workers.org.*

*Source: "I Remember Like Today: the Auto-Lite Strike of 1934," Philip A. Korth and Margaret R. Beegle, Michigan State University Press, 1988.*

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## Talk to Workers World Party forum

# A look at Obama's statement on Palestine-Israel

*In his May 19 speech, President Barack Obama said that the starting point for Palestinian-Israeli peace talks should be Israel's 1967 boundaries. Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's hostile reaction gave the impression that Obama had significantly changed U.S. policy. The following are excerpts from a talk by Joyce Chediac at a Workers World Party forum in New York City on May 20 that analyzes Obama's statements.*

HTTP://WWW.LEEDSPSC.ORG.UK/

**Joyce Chediac** PHOTO: MINJOK-TONGSHIN

Obama made a big deal in the talk about the oppressed only having the right to demonstrate "peacefully." Israel, I guess, has a right to shoot them down.

A Palestinian state would be within its 1967 boundaries. This is exactly what United Nations bodies and the World Court recognize as the areas now under Israeli occupation. They are the Occupied Territories and this includes East Jerusalem. Obama, on the other hand, said the status of Jerusalem, as well as the issue of Palestinian refugees, was to be negotiated.

The Israeli government says this is unacceptable and militarily indefensible. Israel talks about defense of its borders. It is the only state, however, which has no declared borders. History has shown that Israel will expand its borders and annex Arab land whenever this is possible.

Now the Israelis even refuse to dismantle the big high-rise settlements around Jerusalem. For Palestinians living in the West Bank, these settlements have virtually cut off entry to Jerusalem and vice versa.

The White House may want it to look like the U.S. is at odds with Israel now. This plays well in the Middle East. We shouldn't forget, however, that the U.S. is the dog and Israel the tail. There is no substantive disagreement between the U.S. and Israel. Even now, Netanyahu will be honored by being allowed to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress.

What Obama names as a baseline for discussions is the same as U.N. Resolution 242 — indeed, 242 included East Jerusalem as part of Palestine. For years Israel used 242 as a club to hit late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat with. "Recognize 242! Recognize 242!" the Israelis demanded.

But when Arafat did essentially recognize 242, and agreed to accept a Palestinian state limited to the West Bank and Gaza, the Israelis dramatically accelerated their settlement building on Palestinian land in the 242 areas in violation of international law. Suddenly Arafat's acceptance of 242 was not enough for Israel.

**Palestinian refugee holds keys to his lost home.**

Obama called for a land swap to get a "demilitarized" Palestine state that "would meet and respect Israel's security needs." The Palestinian Authority is dismayed because the leaders believed that the status of their military, what arms they have and what police powers the West Bank-Gaza "state" has, were to "be negotiable." They have never agreed to a demilitarized state. How could a region without the ability to defend itself be called a sovereign state?

Obama also explicitly called for a "Jewish state." This was the first time a U.S. president has affirmed the right of Israel to be a "Jewish state." Such a call is a move to the right. As the political atmosphere in Israel moves steadily to the right, Palestinians can only interpret calls for a "Jewish-only" state as being aimed at the large Palestinian minority within Israel who are currently demanding equal rights with Jewish people within Israel.

In the current political climate, Palestinians see this call for a "Jewish state" as leaving the door open to further ethnic cleansing of the 1.3 million Palestinians still within the Israeli green line — pushing them by force into the West Bank.

Obama made an indirect reference to the recent reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas. He baited Hamas as "terrorist" and said he did not know how Israel was expected to negotiate with a group that did not recognize Israel's right to exist.

### Palestine's right to exist

The issue, however, is Palestine's right to exist. On this, Obama even came out against an attempt by the Palestinian Authority to get the U.N. General Assembly in September to vote and declare a Palestinian state. A successful vote would only be symbolic, but it would certainly further isolate Israel. The General Assembly is one of the most democratic of U.N. bodies — one country, one vote. Washington can't use its veto to protect Israel, as it has scores of times in the Security Council.

As for who the terrorists are, there was not one U.S. government word of criticism when Israel opened fire and killed 16 unarmed Palestinian refugees crossing the border into their occupied country on May 15.

In fact, in a bizarre twist, White House spokesperson Jay Carney blamed Syria for the deaths of the Palestinians. He said Syria incited the march to take attention away from its own problems. Carney added that Israel has a right to defend its borders.

Thus the U.S. imposes sanctions against Syrian leader Assad and other Syrian government officials right after Syria allowed Palestinians to march into the Golan Heights from Syria. That's the real crime in the eyes of U.S. imperialism.

Meanwhile, the issues involving the West Bank and Gaza deal with only 22 percent of the territory of historic Palestine. Left out are the great majority of Palestinian people, the 7 million Palestinian refugees, most of them in frontline states bordering Israel, who demonstrated and crossed borders into Israel on May 15, demanding their right to return.

David Ben Gurion, the first Israeli prime minister, said of the expelled Palestinians in 1948: "The old will die and the young will forget." How wrong he was!

The Palestinian mass struggle is alive and well. Sunday, May 15, was the first time in 63 years of exile that Palestinian refugees marked their expulsion by going to the border in the thousands, calling for their right to go home.

With this bold action, Palestinians joined the Arab uprising. They showed that no matter what forces are arrayed against them, the Palestinian people will not abandon their right to return. □

# Protest hits Israeli occupation

The 63-year occupation of indigenous Palestinian land, known as al Nakba (the catastrophe), was condemned May 20 by scores of people gathered outside the Israeli Consulate in Philadelphia. Many helped carry long signs with information on key events covering all the decades since the 1948 "ethnic cleansing" of Palestine, which laid the way for the establishment of the state of Israel.

Each decade sign had information on one event per year reflecting the oppressive colonial occupation, as well as the Palestinian resistance that continues to this day. Protesters carried these signs on a march through busy Center City traffic to a final rally at City Hall.

The protest, one of a series of monthly "third Friday" demonstrations at the Consulate, was organized by Philadelphia Against War and endorsed by a number of groups, including Workers World Party.

**— Betsey Piette**

WW PHOTO: KELLY VALDEZ

**Philadelpha, May 20.**

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# Exposing the truth and lies of Obama's Middle East pro-war speech

**By Abayomi Azikiwe**
**Editor, Pan-African News Wire**

President Barack Obama delivered a foreign policy address related to developments in the Middle East on May 19. The speech — which avoided addressing the uprisings throughout North Africa, the Palestinian question and the U.S./NATO war against Libya — created even more hostility toward his administration domestically and internationally.

Obama stated, "Now, already, we've done much to shift our foreign policy following a decade defined by two costly conflicts. After years of war in Iraq, we've removed 100,000 American troops and ended our combat mission there."

Yet the truth is that nearly 50,000 U.S. troops still remain in Iraq, along with more than 100,000 private contractors. The war of occupation against the country continues with an escalation in casualties among U.S. forces since the beginning of 2011.

Obama claimed that "in Afghanistan, we've broken the Taliban's momentum, and this July we will begin to bring our troops home and continue a transition to Afghan leadership. And after years of war against al-Qaida and its affiliates, we have dealt al-Qaida a huge blow by killing its leader, Osama bin Laden."

Nonetheless, the war of resistance against the U.S. and NATO has escalated in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Afghanistan there have been more deaths among U.S./NATO occupation forces as well as civilians since the administration intensified the war in December 2009.

In Pakistan, there have been mass demonstrations against the U.S. raid that brought the execution of Osama bin Laden and against the continuing drone attacks that kill more civilians than Taliban and al-Qaida fighters hunted down by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon. More attacks on NATO's fuel supply lines are taking place in Pakistan and the military operations by the resistance forces in Afghanistan have hit key installations of the occupation forces.

Obama's speech claims that the U.S. supports the democratic movements that have swept North Africa, but says nothing of the decades-long U.S. backing of neocolonial client regimes in Tunisia and Egypt. The administration's response to the existing military-backed governments in Tunis and Cairo is a "Trade and Investment Partnership," which will only increase debt and dependency for the masses within these North African states.

In response to the Obama speech, Dr. Gideon Polya wrote, "Obama's speech on the Middle East is extraordinary for its comprehensive dishonesty involving egregious deceit, lying by commission and lying by omission. Obama's ignoring of the U.S.-imposed Muslim genocide (about 12 million indigenous deaths in Palestine, Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan) is far worse than genocide denial or holocaust denial because at least 'denial' admits the possibility of public discussion." (The Nation, May 23)

U.S. foreign policy is still guided by imperial aims, which is reflected in the backing of the counterrevolutionary rebels in Libya and the more than two months of bombing of that oil-rich state. In relationship to Libya, Obama stated, "As I said when the United States joined an international coalition to intervene, we cannot prevent every injustice perpetrated by a regime against its people, and we have learned from our experience in Iraq just how costly and difficult it is to try to impose regime change by force — no matter how well-intentioned it may be."

Nonetheless, the bombing of Libya is not the result of an international coalition but rather an alliance of imperialist states in North America and Western Europe. The rebel destabilization campaign and the U.S./NATO bombing have resulted in the displacement of nearly 1 million people and the deaths of thousands.

United Nations Resolution 1973 was merely a cover for launching a full-scale war designed to overthrow the Libyan government and to impose a puppet regime compliant with imperialist objectives in the region. This war against Libya is also attempting to place on hold any genuinely revolutionary movement in either Tunisia or Egypt since the naval blockade, sanctions and bombings imposed by U.S./NATO military forces threaten the entire region.

Obama said of the leadership in Libya, "Now, time is working against Gadhafi. He does not have control over his country. The opposition has organized a legitimate and credible Interim Council. And when Gadhafi inevitably leaves or is forced from power, decades of provocation will come to an end, and the transition to a democratic Libya can proceed."

However, the so-called "credible" counterrevolutionary forces would have been weakened and possibly defeated had it not been for the military intervention of U.S./NATO forces. Therefore, despite the stated reason for the bombing being to "protect" civilians, the administration's real agenda is regime change.

### U.S. gov't violates War Powers Act

Just as the U.N. resolutions against Libya were in actuality designed to destroy the political and economic system inside the country, the flagrant disregard of U.S. law has gained almost no response from Congress. The War Powers Resolution of 1973, which was a byproduct of the popular opposition inside the U.S. to the genocidal war in Vietnam during the post-World War II period, has been blatantly violated in the Libyan war.

A recent online petition initiated by the International Action Center states that the War Powers Act "requires a president involved in a military conflict lasting longer than 60 days to come before Congress for authorization to continue the war. We believe the people of Libya, North Africa, the Middle East, the U.S. and the world deserve a debate on the need to immediately end this war." (www.iacenter.org)

The petition explains that a May 13 NATO bombing that resulted in the deaths of 11 Islamic religious leaders and the injuring of 47 others, who were part of a peace delegation to end the war, represented "a most grievous war crime. It is an unprecedented new level of international lawlessness and it reveals a dangerous escalation of the war on Muslim people. It comes on top of the ongoing criminal assassination attempts on Col. Gadhafi, which have already killed his son and three of his grandchildren."

Obama did submit a request for authorization to continue the war to the U.S. Congress, which has yet to act on it. Even though the 60 days that the War Powers Act allowed the president expired the day after his speech, the attacks against Libya are escalating. Jeffrey Feltman, Washington's assistant secretary of state for the Near East, traveled to Benghazi and met with representatives of the rebel National Transitional Council in a further provocation against the government in Tripoli, which is being bombed daily.

Irrespective of the outcome of the congressional discussion on the U.S./NATO war against Libya, the imperialist states are committed to the ongoing destruction of this North African country, which had the highest income level and standard of living on the continent. The only real hope for ending the war is the continuing resistance of the people in Libya against this military onslaught and the opposition to the regime-change strategy by people in the U.S. and around the world. □

# Japanese workers resist repression as economy slides into recession

**By Gene Clancy**

As the Japanese economy reels from the combined effects of the recent tsunami and human-made nuclear disaster, Japanese workers are facing increased repression as they attempt to fight back against the economic effects of the calamity and expose the nuclear industry for the danger it poses.

On May 20 more than 50 people who were peacefully protesting were forcibly arrested and dragged out of the Tokyo High Court Building. This was an attempt to intimidate a movement of Japanese workers who have protested the unsafe use of nuclear power and the economic policies of the Japanese government and business class.

This latest incident is only the most recent in a campaign of intimidation which began shortly after a March 20 demonstration of more than 1,500 people in Tokyo. They were protesting the government's handling of the Fukushima nuclear disaster and the general use of nuclear power in Japan.

In April, in the Suginami Ward in Tokyo, an incumbent City Council member who has been campaigning for re-election on an anti-nuclear-plant platform and his supporters were subjected to arbitrary arrests and harassment, despite the lack of any material evidence against them. Police also raided two offices of his election campaign and seized lists of supporters in order to intimidate them. (International Labor Solidarity Committee of Doro Chiba, the National Railway Workers Union of Chiba, April 9)

The workers of Japan also face a deepening economic crisis. The worldwide downturn had already weakened the Japanese economy. Now, following the tsunami and nuclear disasters, the economy has plunged back into recession.

Kaoru Yosano, minister for economic and fiscal policy, said earlier that the March 11 disaster had been the main reason for the fall in output and insisted that growth would soon return. "The Japanese economy has a great deal of resiliency," Yosano said. (Financial Times, May 19)

However, the extent of the first-quarter fall — equivalent to a 3.7 percent decline on an annualized basis — underscores the scale of the disruption caused by the natural disaster and resulting nuclear crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant.

Not only in the disaster areas but also in whole regions of East Japan, workers face massive dismissals and unemployment. The earthquake and tsunami have hit and immobilized thousands of workplaces in Tohoku and Kanto areas. Many factories have had to stop operation all over Japan for lack of parts. This happened because major auto manufacturers and electric machinery corporations rely on outsourcing and their production depends on subcontractors or sub-subcontractors for parts.

When these subcontractors are located in the disaster area, as many are, needed parts don't show up. Many workers with only irregular employment have been thrown out of daily work without any financial support.

"The number of possible jobless people is beyond assessment. No rescue measure has been offered or planned for those jobless workers. Japan is going to be a huge unemployment peninsula as a result of the earthquake." (ILSC of Doro Chiba, April 9)

The May 19 Financial Times of London confirmed the economic impact of the human-made Japanese nuclear disaster: "Japan's devastating tsunami and nuclear disaster pushed the economy much further into recession than expected, raising doubts about the prospects for the world's third-largest economy. According to preliminary data released on Thursday [May 19], gross domestic product fell 0.9 percent in the first quarter of this year compared with the previous three months. That was nearly twice the decline forecast by economists. ... Japan's economy has now contracted for two quarters in a row, meeting the most widely used definition of a recession."

Frederic Neumann, economist at HSBC Global Research, put it succinctly in a May 19 report: "The ground is slipping."

Japanese workers have been forced to fight back on two fronts. The first is to recover from the effects of a devastating natural disaster and the accompanying nuclear crisis caused by poor planning and disregard for safety on the part of the Japanese capitalists. Second, they are battling the attempts of the Japanese government and big business to force the workers to pay for the physical and economic damage which were mainly caused by the capitalists.

The Japanese workers' struggle is our struggle. They need and deserve the support of poor, working and oppressed people around the world. □

WORKERS WORLD editorial

# DSK & the IMF

When Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote the "Communist Manifesto," they derided the capitalist class for accusing communists of advocating "a community of women." In fact, it was these same moralizing bourgeois moneybags who, "not content with having wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each other's wives."

What communists want, they explained, is to "do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production."

There was no International Monetary Fund in 1848, when they wrote these lines, and capitalism had not yet pulled the whole world into its mad stampede for profits. But it was well established in Europe, the bourgeoisie having just finally defeated the feudal landowning nobility to become the dominant political class. And its moral hypocrisy was already transparent.

Now, a century and a half later, we have Dominique Strauss-Kahn, just forced to resign as head of the IMF after being arrested on the charge of sexually attacking a young African maid in a posh New York hotel. DSK, as he has become known in the tabloids, was considered a shoo-in to be candidate of the French Socialist Party in the next presidential election there.

Marx and Engels would roll over in their graves to hear that such a bourgeois party dares to call itself socialist.

There has been no trial yet, and almost all the information on this case reported in the press comes from the New York City police - certainly no champions of immigrant women workers, especially from Africa, the most plundered and oppressed continent in the world. So it is right to be wary at this point.

The Murdoch papers are having a field day of anti-French chauvinism, using pejoratives borrowed from the haughty and degrading lexicon of British imperialism to imply that only the French like Strauss-Kahn can be so disgusting. The ongoing Arnold Schwarzenegger "nanny" scandal shoots down that notion. And some French seem to believe that it all may be a plot by the political forces of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, a right-winger and friend of George W. Bush who presides over an imperialist power every bit as aggressive as the U.S., especially in Africa.

However, facts are stubborn things and it seems that a lot of them have come out nailing DSK as a sexual predator with women he felt he could dominate. These included professional women under his chain of command at the IMF as well as other service workers similar to the maid at the Sofitel hotel, where he was staying in a $3,000 a day suite of rooms.

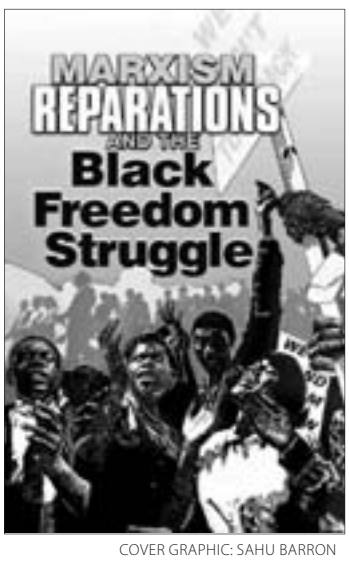
Despite all the media craze around this case, there's a lot that is not being talked about or speculated on. For example, very few point out that the woman in question is a union member whose contract specifies that worker allegations of sexual harassment or violence must be taken seriously and followed up on by management. Would she have dared to speak out otherwise?

But there's a deeper issue that is completely ignored - and that is the role of the IMF in "raping" poor countries caught in the debt trap. Many books have been written showing that this institution, in the guise of bailing out the economies of countries impoverished by generations of colonial and neocolonial exploitation, in fact forces them deeper in debt by imposing "structural adjustment programs."

These SAPs undermine local production, force privatization of public firms and services, and terminate subsidies on food and other necessities. As a result, the countries required to impose SAPs in order to get loans - most often so they can pay their "debts" to the imperialist overlords - have seen a sharp decline in health, education and other indices of the health of a society.

Dominique Strauss-Kahn, to become head of the IMF, must have had a strong résumé in being able to rationalize in elegant language why it is necessary to treat the people of the global South as expendable objects whose existence is tolerated in order to provide for the comforts and desires of the wealthy elite.

It is not necessary to believe that he raped this woman worker in order to hate him and his kind. But such heinous conduct is certainly consistent with the behavior of so many "great men" produced by this loathsome profit system. With Marx and Engels, we fight for a truly socialist society, freed of the parasitic capitalist class, in which women and workers of all nationalities will no longer be "mere instruments of production." □

COVER GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

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# U.S. pushes repression in Latin America

**By Berta Joubert-Ceci**

While mass demonstrations and uprisings are challenging puppet regimes that carry out imperialism's neoliberal, privatizing and anti-people policies, the leading imperialist power, the United States, is on a witch-hunting rampage. It is aided by ultra-right forces at home and abroad and by its surrogates in friendly states. They use the "terrorist" label to arrest, prosecute and even execute those they feel are a threat to imperialism — that is, to monopoly capitalism in its final stage.

Two recent examples in the Caribbean and Latin America illustrate this, one in Puerto Rico and another regarding Venezuela and Colombia.

### Criminalization of P.R. independence movement

During a 20-minute hearing on May 10 in a Hartford, Conn., federal court, Norberto González Claudio pleaded not guilty to charges related to the theft of $7.2 million in 1983 from a Wells Fargo truck by the Boricua Popular Army-Macheteros, a socialist, pro-independence clandestine group.

Ten days earlier, agents of the FBI and the Puerto Rico Bureau of Special Investigations had arrested him in a town in the center of the island. After more than two decades in which he lived clandestinely for the "crime" of fighting for the liberation of his homeland, the question is why he was arrested now. Is there a concerted effort to retaliate against anti-capitalist and pro-socialist liberation movements?

His brother, Avelino González Claudio, has been in a U.S. prison for the same charges since 2008. On May 9 he was suddenly classified as a "domestic terrorist" and separated from the general prison population. While in isolation, he is more vulnerable to becoming a victim of torture. For more than a year he has been denied medicine for Parkinson's disease, causing permanent neurological damage.

On May 10 another Puerto Rican political prisoner in U.S. dungeons, Oscar López Rivera, was denied parole on the grounds that his release would "promote disrespect for the law." He has been behind bars for almost 30 years. (prolibertadweb.tripod.com)

Many pro-independence figures on the island are under constant police and FBI surveillance. They remember too well the vicious and cruel assassination of Macheteros leader Filiberto Ojeda Ríos in 2005, who, after being shot, bled to death while hundreds of FBI agents stood by, denying him emergency medical care.

This was meant as a warning to the progressive forces in the island-colony, where the political situation is at the boiling point. The pro-statehood, Tea Party-affiliated Gov. Luis Fortuño has sped up neoliberalism by imposing privatizing laws that benefit the criollo bourgeoisie and U.S. transnational corporations. An example is his effort to privatize the prestigious public University of Puerto Rico, which has awakened a glorious student movement.

Fortuño has increased the repressive force of the state as an appendage of the U.S. by nominating the second in command of the FBI office there to head the Puerto Rican police.

### Venezuela & Colombia

In South America, U.S.-imposed efforts to criminalize struggle and silence the opposition have taken on another form.

On the same day that U.S. authorities were busy criminalizing Puerto Rican pro-independence fighters, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, an imperialist think tank, launched its latest document for aggression, this time against Venezuela and Ecuador. The IISS, it should be remembered, masterminded the lie about "weapons of mass destruction" that served as the basis for the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Nigel Inkster, IISS director of Transnational Threats and Political Risk, released a book called "The FARC Files: Venezuela, Ecuador and the Secret Archive of 'Raúl Reyes.'" Inkster had also been involved in the WMD deception.

The book accuses both the Venezuelan and Ecuadorean governments of close collaboration with the Marxist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which the U.S. government lists as a terrorist organization.

However, the book has already been discredited — by no less than the Colombian Supreme Court.

The IISS report is based primarily on Interpol's supposed findings regarding the computer files of FARC leader Raúl Reyes. It claims that his computer and pen drives were miraculously saved intact after the Colombian military bombed a FARC encampment in Ecuador near the border with Colombia on March 1, 2008. The bombing killed Reyes and 22 other people, including Mexican students visiting the camp. The report is clearly meant to up the aggression against Venezuela and its efforts to develop sovereignty and regional unity with independence from imperialism.

It is ironic that the Venezuelan government a few weeks before the IISS report handed over revolutionary journalist Joaquin Becerra to the criminal Colombian government of Juan Manuel Santos, supposedly because Becerra was on Interpol's list of people linked to FARC.

Becerra, a survivor of the progressive electoral bloc Patriotic Union, which was massacred by death squads in the 1980s after winning many local offices throughout Colombia, had to take refuge in Sweden more than 10 years ago. He became a Swedish citizen and started an alternative online journal, ANNCOL, which reported about the reality in Colombia.

For that, ANNCOL has been a target of former President Alvaro Uribe and now of the Santos administration, which wants to whitewash Colombia's image in order to sign a Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.

Che Guevara's statement of "al imperialismo, ni un tantito así" (no concession to imperialism, even the smallest one) has proven correct once again. Imperialism forced the hand of the Venezuelan government, through U.S.-ally Santos, only to turn around and accuse it of aiding terrorists anyway.

Now Becerra is in danger, along with thousands of other political prisoners in Colombia, the country he was forced to leave after his first wife was killed there.

On May 19 the whole basis for accusing Becerra was demolished. The Colombian Supreme Court ruled that the so-called evidence from the Reyes computer was not valid and was in fact illegal, since, among other considerations, the alleged computer equipment was taken without the authorization or participation of the Ecuadorean government.

The court also pointed out that the files used to accuse the Venezuelan and Ecuadorean governments, Becerra, many other activists and even progressive Colombian Sen. Piedad Córdoba were in Word format, not emails, so it could not be proven that they were sent or received. (AFP, May 19)

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## Victory for the Resistance

# Manuel Zelaya to return to Honduras

**By Heather Cottin**

Manuel Zelaya is going home. After nearly two years in forced exile, after two years of protests and marches, after strikes in the streets of Honduras, after the martyrdom of hundreds of members of a huge nationwide resistance, Hondurans have won the right to bring back "Mel," their "Máximo Líder," the elected General Coordinator of the Front for the National Popular Resistance of Honduras (FNRP).

A U.S.-government-backed coup ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya Rosales on June 28, 2009. After Roberto Micheletti was immediately sworn in as de facto president, the "golpistas" (coup plotters), the Honduran oligarchy and U.S. corporate and military interests figured they had successfully eliminated Zelaya and his reforms. During his presidency, Zelaya rejected neoliberalism and the Honduran ruling class by attempting to have Honduras join ALBA, the anti-free-trade, socially oriented Bolivarian trade bloc headed by Venezuela. With Zelaya president, Honduras also raised the minimum wage 60 percent, enacted land reforms, provided free education and fed hungry children.

With the support of the U.S. government, the golpistas kidnapped Zelaya and sent him into exile, forestalling the "Constituyente," a proposal to restructure the country's constitution to promote social improvement.

The coup aroused a mighty resistance movement. Workers World newspaper has written extensively about the Honduran Resistance from the beginning. In every department, in every city and hamlet, the Honduran Resistance has developed into an extraordinary force.

Honduras is a country of about 8 million people. On International Workers' Day, May 1, more than 3 million FNRP Hondurans marched. On their banners and in their chants for the rights of workers and peasants, they called for Zelaya's return, for a refoundation of their homeland and for the Constituyente.

### Liars, fascists & irresistible forces

After the June 2009 coup, the Organization of American States ejected Honduras from membership. Washington tried to legitimize the Honduran regime by promoting a phony election in November 2009, but Latin American nations in Mercasur, UNASUR and the Caribbean refused to recognize the government of "Pepe" Lobo.

Though U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton gushed about democracy's return to Honduras, oligarchs like Miguel Facussé still used his private army to kill peasants, while police and private cops murdered teachers, students, lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer people, women, Original (Indigenous) people, and union leaders with impunity. The government refused to pay the country's teachers or public workers and the golpistas who raided teacher pension funds kept the money.

Meanwhile the FNRP kept organizing. In February the revolutionaries held a National Assembly with representatives from all over the country, who elected Mel Zelaya in absentia as their general coordinator. They vowed to restructure the Constituyente and to bring back Zelaya.

In an interview with Workers World, Lucy Pagoada, a representative of the Nineteenth Department — Hondurans in the Diaspora — and a member of Honduras Resistencia USA, expressed her opinion on why Zelaya has been allowed to return.

"About a month ago, [Venezuelan President] Hugo Chávez met in Cartagena, Colombia, with Juan Manuel Santos, president of Colombia, and Honduran so-called "president" Porfirio Lobo. The meeting was probably at the behest of the United States, which wanted Honduras back in the OAS. The U.S. has been anxious to get Honduras 'under control.' Since the coup it has been ungovernable. They decided to bring Zelaya home so Honduras would be back in the OAS before its regional meeting in June."

### U.S. covert involvement

Honduras is an outpost of U.S. capitalism. Early in May in the city of San Pedro Sula, businessmen from 55 countries came to a three-day event called by Bill Clinton: "Honduras: Open for Business." In the last two years since the coup, fake elections, the unparalleled golpista violence and the increasing resistance have caused foreign capital to flee Honduras. There has been a 46 percent decline in investment. (New Statesman, May 8) With a 51 percent unemployment rate in 2009, the worldwide recession hit Honduras especially hard.

But poverty only increased resistance. So the May 22nd Cartagena Accords signaled the end to Zelaya's exile in order to placate his supporters. The accords call for respect for human rights and legitimize FNRP participation in Honduran political life. (AP, May 22) Hondurans are hopeful, but the level of repression in the country and the viciousness of the golpistas who are still in power in every locality and in national government make these promises dubious.

"Mel is due to return to Honduras on Saturday, May 28," said Pagoada. She predicted that hundreds of thousands or more would be on hand to greet Zelaya at Toncontín Airport in Tegucigalpa. "Most Hondurans see this as a historical triumph of the democratic process," which was facilitated by the courageous organizing of the Honduran Resistance.

"The U.S. got what it wanted," Andreas Tomás Conteris told Workers World. Conteris, program director for the syndicated "Democracy Now!" radio and television show in Spanish, was incarcerated in the Brazilian Embassy with Zelaya for four months during the coup. "The Cartagena Accords sound great in theory, but are not implementable. Impunity still reigns in Honduras. But this is the people's moment, and the peoples' movement will gain strength." □

# Mass youth revolt shakes Spanish state

Madrid, May 21

*Continued from page 1*

tinued to hold the encampments. Some plan to stay until the following weekend.

Aerial photos of the Puerta del Sol in Madrid show a number of large banners that were raised in the square. One of the most prominent reads, "La crisis es el capitalismo" ("The crisis is capitalism"). Tents and other structures — offering medical, legal and food services — have been established and demonstrators have constituted various assemblies to carry out the many tasks required to maintain the occupation and to vote on different political objectives.

Many of the different communist parties and organizations active in the Spanish state have issued statements of support for the wave of occupations, dubbed the 15-M (May 15) movement, and have been active participants in these demonstrations. They view their main tasks as helping to develop and deepen the working-class consciousness of the protests and to unite the various sectors that are in motion against the capitalist austerity in order to open a broader, worker-led political struggle against the Spanish state and the two ruling parties — the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) and the People's Party (PP).

### Spain in context

In the elections held May 22, the governing PSOE was dealt a defeat by the PP, even in strongholds the self-styled socialists have held since the end of Franco's fascist dictatorial rule in the mid-1970s, at which time a number of democratic reforms were introduced.

Despite what its name might suggest, the PSOE is a historically social democratic party that currently occupies a position similar to the one the Democratic Party holds here in the U.S. At its congress back in 1979, the PSOE renounced Marxism and the revolutionary struggle of the working class and is now one of the two main capitalist parties in the country.

The other, the People's Party (PP), is a right-wing party formed in 1989 as a result of the merger of various reactionary parties. Many in the leadership of the PP have connections going back to the Franco regime, with some even having served under him during the fascist rule over the country from 1940 to 1975.

Spain has the world's twelfth-largest economy. Spain also has the European Union's third-largest budget deficit and may, like Ireland, Greece and Portugal, be forced to accept a devastating IMF austerity package if it cannot satisfy the banks with its own austerity measures soon.

Within the Galician, Basque and Catalonian regions of the Spanish state there are movements for national self-determination.

Of the three main countrywide trade union federations, only one, the CGT, has continued to wage an open struggle against the state around the austerity programs. The other two federations — the UGT and the Workers' Commissions (CCOO) — granted concessions to the PSOE government following the country's first general strike in more than 10 years last Sept. 29 and agreed to stop future mass actions of workers. Most regional unions in the Basque Country, however, support the workers' struggles.

### Capitalism to blame

Although the current demonstrations began one week prior to elections, this revolt is directed not merely against one capitalist party or the other, but is an uprising against the miserable conditions that have been forced upon young people and workers by capitalism and the global crisis, which is now four years old.

The workers, the unemployed and the young people of the Spanish state are following the heroic example of the peoples of Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere throughout North Africa and the Middle East as they take their destiny into their own hands and fight back.

The May 22 elections came and went, but the occupation shows no signs of giving up. Organizers have continued to hold the encampments in Madrid and elsewhere throughout the country and have set May 28 as another major day of demonstrations. □

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# SIRIA — ¿Qué hay detrás de las protestas?

**Por Joyce Chediac**

En EE.UU. y alrededor del mundo la gente tiene amplia simpatía con las manifestaciones populares que se están desarrollando en el Oriente Medio. Sin embargo, todos los levantamientos no son necesariamente los mismos.

Las protestas contra los regímenes clientes del Occidente, como las de Egipto y Túnez que tan severamente han oprimido a los/as trabajadores/as, tienen el potencial de liberar al pueblo de la aplastante pobreza y represión. Sin embargo, la situación en Libia y Siria son un tanto diferente.

Estos gobiernos, aunque defectuosos, han sido blanco de los esfuerzos de desestabilización de EE.UU. durante décadas, ya que han tomado posiciones independientes de Washington. Las potencias occidentales, encabezadas por EE.UU., están tratando de aprovecharse de la ola de protestas en la región para intervenir en Libia y Siria a fin de hacer a estos países cautivos del colonialismo occidental y convertir a sus trabajadores en jornaleros para el imperialismo.

Contraste esto con Bahréin y Yemen, países gobernados por regímenes clientes de EE.UU. que han estado alienados de la clase trabajadora que allí vive y trabaja. Estos regímenes han detenido, torturado y disparado contra los/as manifestantes. Sin embargo, ninguno de estos países han sido declarados zona de exclusión aérea ni tampoco el gobierno ha sido objeto de sanciones. En Libia, sin embargo, la "intervención humanitaria" del Occidente para "proteger a los civiles" ha significado seis semanas de bombardeo que ha destruido gran parte de la infraestructura civil del país.

Ahora las mismas potencias occidentales que están bombardeando a Libia están amenazando a Siria, el único estado secular independiente en el mundo árabe. Tanto EE.UU. como la Unión Económica han impuesto sanciones a los funcionarios del gobierno sirio. ¿Por qué?

Por un lado, Washington está tratando de romper la creciente alianza estratégica entre Siria e Irán. También está tratando de detener el crucial apoyo que Siria le da a Hizbolá en el Líbano y a Hamás en Cisjordania. Para ello, el capital financiero estadounidense busca desestabilizar a Siria, destruir su soberanía y traerlo de vuelta a la órbita imperialista.

### ¿Quién protesta en Siria?

Las demostraciones se llevan a cabo contra el gobierno de Bashir Assad en Siria, que ha respondido con fuerza, al menos en algunas ocasiones. Pero el carácter real de estas manifestaciones no está claro. ¿Hasta qué punto son manifestaciones populares verdaderas? ¿Cuál ha sido la respuesta real del gobernante Partido Árabe Socialista Baaz de Siria?

Está claro el hecho de que el imperialismo estadounidense está tratando de utilizar estas protestas para su propio beneficio. Esto no tiene nada que ver con ninguna de las demandas planteadas por los/as trabajadores/as sirios, quienes están sufriendo de un plan de austeridad impuesto por el Fondo Monetario Internacional en 2006. Michel Chossudovsky escribió el 3 de mayo que entre las protestas hay "una insurrección organizada compuesta por bandas armadas" que entró en la ciudad siria de Dara'a desde Jordania. (GlobalResearch.ca) Dara'a es donde comenzaron las protestas.

Mientras tanto, los medios de comunicación estatales sirios no dicen mucho mientras que los medios corporativos occidentales así como Al Jazeera han sido acusados de exagerar las protestas y la represión del gobierno sirio. Rusia Hoy del 30 de abril cita a un agente de viajes que vive en Siria diciendo que manifestaciones pro-Assad fueron calificadas como "contra-Assad" por Al Jazeera; las protestas antigubernamentales reportadas por Al Jazeera y Reuters no sucedieron; y pietajes de video de protestas en otros países han sido atribuidas a Siria.

Mientras los artículos de primera plana dan la impresión de que la mayoría del pueblo sirio ha salido a las calles contra Assad, la mayoría de los expertos del establecimiento en el Medio Oriente admite que el gobierno sirio está apoyado por la mayoría del pueblo.

### Necesaria la perspectiva política marxista

El capital financiero mundial y sus portavoces, los medios de comunicación, parecen estar "preparando una emboscada" al gobierno sirio. Pero el imperialismo no es todopoderoso. Puede ser combatido y derrotado. ¿Qué es lo que podrían el gobierno sirio y el pueblo todavía hacer para no dejar una puerta abierta a la intervención de los Estados Unidos? ¿Qué podría cerrar esta apertura ahora? El Marxismo proporciona las herramientas para responder a estas preguntas.

El término marxista para el tipo de gobierno que existe en Siria es "nacionalista burgués". Esto también es cierto sobre Libia, Irán e Irak antes de la invasión de Estados Unidos. Son nacionalistas porque buscan desarrollar sus países libres de la dominación imperialista. Son burgueses porque están gobernados por una clase explotadora de capitalistas.

Los y las marxistas apoyamos estos gobiernos en su lucha contra el imperialismo porque son manifestaciones de la libre determinación del pueblo oprimido. Esto no significa que los/as marxistas apoyemos todas las políticas de estos gobiernos.

Los/as marxistas también reconocemos que estos regímenes tienen un carácter dual. Los nacionalistas burgueses intentan expulsar a los imperialistas para poder explotar mejor a sus trabajadores/as. Pero tienen un interés común con los/as trabajadores/as cuando el imperialismo amenaza la soberanía del país. Estos gobiernos sin embargo, no pueden luchar consecuentemente contra el imperialismo; sólo la clase obrera puede.

### En el frente con Israel

¿Cómo esto ha funcionado en Siria?

Siria ha sido gobernada desde 1966 por un gobierno secular dominado por el Partido Árabe Socialista Baaz. El actual jefe de estado es Bashir Assad. Siria es un "estado de primera línea", fronterizo con Israel. Este hecho afecta todos los aspectos de la historia de Siria y la ha convertido en un objeto de constante presión imperialista y sionista, lo que une el destino del pueblo sirio a la lucha palestina.

La nacionalización de un oleoducto estadounidense por Siria precipitó la guerra del 1967, cuando Israel atacó y ocupó los Altos del Golán de Siria, la Cisjordania palestina, la Franja de Gaza y la Península del Sinaí egipcia. Los Altos del Golán desde entonces han sido anexados por Israel.

Aunque Siria ahora desempeña un papel regional progresista, no siempre fue así. En 1976, el gobierno sirio intervino al lado de los fascistas del Líbano, que estaban armados por Israel, en la guerra civil del Líbano contra una alianza revolucionaria de Palestina y el Líbano. Los capitalistas sirios temían que un Líbano revolucionario podría resultar en su derrocamiento por los trabajadores sirios.

Sin embargo, la presión incesante de EE.UU. e Israel, y el rechazo de devolver las Alturas del Golán a Siria han alterado la posición de sus líderes a una postura anti-imperialista. El rol que desempeñan hoy en día como aliado de Irán, de Hizbolá en el Líbano y de Hamás en Gaza, es crucial para detener la agresión israelí y estadounidense en la región.

### Crisis capitalista desestabiliza estados independientes

Como otros gobiernos nacionalistas burgueses, Siria no ha roto con el mercado capitalista mundial, ni tiene la intención de hacerlo. En cambio, busca un mejor trato en ese mercado, el cual está totalmente dominado por los bancos del Oeste. Durante crisis económicas, los gobiernos nacionalistas como el de Siria, están forzados por Wall Street a hacer concesiones económicas que atacan a los/as trabajadores/as y estimulan el crecimiento de una élite pro-imperialista, "la burguesía compradora". Esto socava la independencia del gobierno al imperialismo mientras lo aísla de los/as trabajadores/as.

En el 2006 Siria adoptó un plan del FMI que imponía medidas de austeridad, la congelación de sueldos, la apertura de la economía para los bancos extranjeros y la privatización de industrias controladas por el gobierno. Los imperialistas saben esto.

Escribió el New York Times el 30 de abril, "El estado sirio suministraba electricidad a todas las poblaciones, pero . . . ya no puede permitirse el gasto del contrato social para cubrir las necesidades de su pueblo".

"Los críticos del régimen dicen que la liberalización económica ha beneficiado a un grupo élite de hombres de negocio como Rami Makhlouf, el primo materno del Sr. Assad quien controla una parte significativa de la economía, incluyendo SiriaTel, la operadora de la red móvil del país". (Financial Times, 26 de abril) Según el reporte del NY Times, Makhlouf, un blanco de la disidencia, se ha convertido en símbolo del "capitalismo de compinches, haciendo a los/as pobres más pobres y a los ricos conectados, fantásticamente ricos".

El gobierno sirio podría protegerse de la desestabilización imperialista revirtiendo este ataque económico contra los/as trabajadores/as, cuyo apoyo constituye la mejor fortaleza de Siria. Las medidas podrían incluir la retirada de la liberalización de la economía impidiendo la penetración del capital extranjero; la restauración del control estatal de la electricidad, las comunicaciones y otras industrias claves; la prioridad a la producción de alimentos, y la restauración de las subvenciones. Estas medidas ganarían a esos elementos de la población que están manifestándose en las calles, restauraría su confianza en el gobierno, y aseguraría que no hubiera espacio fértil para la desestabilización imperialista.

A la misma vez, los/as trabajadores/as y progresistas aquí deben oponerse a la intervención estadounidense en Siria en todas las formas posibles. Si los imperialistas recuperan el control total en Siria, sería lo peor para todos los pueblos oprimidos en el Medio Oriente y también para la clase trabajadora y el pueblo oprimido aquí en este país. □

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## Libertad para los cinco cubanos

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